

MONTHLY BULLETIN

PENNSYLVANIA DEPARTMENT OF WELFARE

Vol. I, No. 8

HARRISBURG, PA.

DECEMBER, 1932

STATE SEEKS LESSENERD WELFARE COSTS THROUGH PREVENTIVE MEASURES

WHAT, precisely, is the State's responsibility for welfare? What is welfare, anyway? Like charity, it is a loosely used and much abused term, variously stretched to cover such diverse activities as the doling out of doughnuts to soldiers and the painless extinction of homeless cats.

Webster defines welfare as a "condition of health, happiness, prosperity, etc.; exemption from evil or calamity."—A large order, that, in this Pennsylvania winter of 1932! Thousands on thousands of dependents, delinquents, defectives, children without families, families without homes, homes without money, are looking wistfully to the State—not for health, happiness and prosperity, perhaps, but at least for some measure of alleviation from evil and calamity.

A time of disaster, economic or physical, brings inevitably greater demands upon the agency of government charged with the welfare of the citizenry. It focuses attention more than ever upon the body politic's need for a continuing and constructive program for insuring some degree of social and economic security to its citizens.

Feeding the hungry is not enough. Caring for the mentally, physically, morally and economically ill in institutions is not enough. Vital and necessary as these measures are, they should be but stop-gaps in any comprehensive social plan. There is little glory in the rapidly swelling populations of the ap-

proximately fourteen hundred institutions (twenty-eight State-owned and two hundred and thirty-five State-aided) supervised by the Department of Welfare. There is scant comfort in the development of higher professional standards, better facilities, more humane methods, unless the future bears some hope of replacing these hordes of the dependent and unfit with self-reliant dependent citizens.

To that end the Department of Welfare stresses prevention as its major purpose—prevention of the very dependency, delinquency and mental disease for which it is now its function to care. This is sound doctrine even if viewed from the standpoint of economic saving alone, for institutionalization is an expensive luxury. At present almost ninety per cent of the Department's budget goes for the construction, maintenance and aid of the various types of institutions, and only twelve per cent for the diversified preventive activities represented by the work of the Mothers' Assistance Fund, the Orthopaedic Unit, the Council for the Blind and the Department's general program of social education.

Yet despite this one-sided tipping of the financial scales in favor of institutional care, the proverbial ounce of prevention is still worth the proverbial pound of cure. The Council for the Blind, for instance, finds that the cost of educating a blind child through high school is almost ten times as great as

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WHERE THE WELFARE DOLLAR GOES

Representing total appropriation for welfare purposes **\$1.00**

This is apportioned as follows:

For Mental Hospitals **26.7 cents**
(State-Owned and State-Aided)

For Medical and Surgical Hospitals **23.2 cents**
(State-Owned and State-Aided)

For Penal and Correctional Institutions **15.9 cents**
(State-Owned and State-Aided)

For the Construction Program of State Institutions **13.5 cents**

For the Mothers' Assistance Fund **9.7 cents**

For Schools for Mental Defectives **8.1 cents**
(State-Owned and State-Aided)

For State-Aided Homes for Adults and Children **1.5 cents**

For all Administrative Expenses of **1.4 cents**
Department of Welfare
Council for the Blind
Alcohol Permit Board
Orthopaedic Unit
(including sums for fees and subsidies to Orthopaedic Clinics)

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EDITORIAL

By Alice F. Liveright, *Secretary of Welfare*

THE prevention of social breakdown is something not to be measured by height and weight, by blood pressure or haemoglobin. Its subtle and insidious results are difficult to appraise. Just as in modern education we have accepted the principle of starting earlier and earlier, with the nursery school and the kindergarten, so in our social program we must undertake to reach fundamental causes if we are to develop wholesome communities.

Probably it is only because most of us are not accustomed to accepting preventive measures that we encounter occasional doubts as to the value of such functions of a state welfare department as trained inspection, probation and field work. Certainly if inspection meant merely a hurried visit to an institution counting noses or washrooms, professional welfare workers would not be needed. But when inspection means protection to the individuals housed in institutions and to entire communities, it takes on a different color.

Some years ago, for instance, the Bureau of Children discovered on an isolated farm in a rural county a children's home that had been started by a man and his wife as a religious enterprise. Without any difficulty, although there was much opposition to their work in the community, they secured incorporation through their local court. The home was run on "faith principles," no appeal for funds being made. Reliance was entirely on answers to prayers and the interest of the community. A recent visit indicated that water for all purposes had to be hauled in barrels for more than a mile. There were nineteen children residing in the small farm house, with no adequate fire protection. Two infants had died within the year without medical attention because of the proprietors' reliance on religious faith for all cures.

As a result of these discoveries, the Bureau of Children has enlisted the cooperation of the Department of Labor and Industry in a demand for better fire protection. Through the Department of Health the local state nurse has been requested to visit the home and help to develop a better understanding of physical and medical care.

Who would not support a program to protect innocent children from a fate like this? Or who would not consider preventive measures justified when they insure

definite economies to the community? A recent report of a field worker of the Bureau of Mental Health is interesting in this connection—as an instance of locking the stable door too late.

Following the recent admittance of an epileptic idiot to Pennhurst State School it was learned that his older sister, an imbecile, is in the Laurelton State Village. There are four other imbecile children at home, while three, who were epileptic idiots, have died. The last-born baby is a cripple. The mother is a feeble-minded woman whose mental limitations were never considered until her family had become a serious social problem. Some day all her children will be State or county charges.

One of the prime objectives of the field workers of the Bureau of Mental Health is the early identification of mental defectives through mental clinics all over the State. If such clinics had existed when this woman was a child her low mentality would probably have been recognized and provision made for her care, with resultant prevention not only of this tragically defective family but also of large expense to the taxpayers.

No one questions the auditing of fiscal accounts. Is there not at least equal need for the less tangible accounting involved in a human audit?

MINIMUM HOSPITAL STANDARDS PRESCRIBED

BEGINNING with the year 1933 each of the one hundred and sixty-one State-aided medical and surgical hospitals in Pennsylvania will be required, before payment can be made on its appropriation, to comply with the terms of the "Minimum Standards for State-Aided Hospitals" prepared by the Department of Welfare.

These rules and regulations, authorized by the administrative Code of 1929, are the result of almost a year of intensive study and preparation by a committee representing the Hospital Association of Pennsylvania and the State Departments of Health, Labor and Industry, Justice, Public Instruction, and Welfare. They have been approved by the Welfare Commission and their legality passed upon by the Department of Justice.

Standards below which the hospitals must not fall in plant and equipment, administration and service, and care and treatment all are established in this important document, copies of which were distributed late in November to the hospitals affected. Since many hospitals already have standards far exceeding those now prescribed as a minimum, the primary effect of the new regulations will be to serve as a practically mandatory incentive to the weaker institutions to raise their equipment and services to the level required by approved modern medical practice.

After the standards go into effect the Department of Welfare may at its discretion withhold its requisitions for State aid. Institutions falling below the standards will be allowed a reasonable period in which to comply.

State aid to hospitals during the biennium 1931-1933 amounts to \$7,151,500, given them as repayment in part for the free service they render to legal residents of Pennsylvania who cannot afford to pay for hospital care. Payments of State aid, which are administered by the Bureau of Assistance of the Department of Welfare, are made on the basis of hospital records giving detailed information on the number of approved free days of hospital service.

STATE SEEKS LESSENED COSTS THROUGH PREVENTION

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the cost of an equivalent education for a normal seeing child. And to add weight to this comparison the Council and its cooperating organizations are proving constantly that many cases of blindness, particularly in childhood, can be avoided.

Innumerable other instances of saving—both in money and in human misery—are furnished by the Mothers' Assistance Fund and the mental and orthopaedic clinics, as well as by constructively planned probation and parole work in mental and penal institutions. If a payment of 35 dollars a month can keep together in their own home a mother and three children who might otherwise become institutional charges at a cost several times as great, the State and the county have saved money and three children have been given a fairer chance to start life on a basis of equality with their fellows.

Every taxpayer of Pennsylvania is an ultimate gainer from the mental health clinics that seek to save adults and children from the mental illnesses that darken their lives and make them a burden on society, from the orthopaedic clinics that avert a lifetime of crippled dependency for many a physically handicapped child, and from the far-sighted guidance of under-privileged children that lessens juvenile delinquency and ensuing adult crime. Yet these are but entering wedges in the fully rounded program of prevention that should eventually be developed by the Department of Welfare—a program in which the advisability of social insurance in its various forms should be seriously considered.

Not even the most ardent advocate of preventive welfare measures will deny that some degree of custodial care will always be necessary. Humanity, even in Utopia, will probably always produce a certain proportion of unfit, antisocial and unfortunate individuals for whom society must care. In Pennsylvania this proportion is still very large. To make it progressively smaller the while it offers expert and sympathetic care and treatment to those whom fate has made its wards—these are the concerns of the Department of Welfare.

Pennsylvania, unlike New York and several other large states, includes within the domain of the Welfare Department not only the care of dependency but also the control of prisons and reformatories, mental hospitals and medical and surgical hospitals. This unified administration is responsible for Pennsylvania's low per capita institutional costs. In the State-owned mental hospitals, for instance, with a population averaging 12,620 patients, Pennsylvania's weekly cost per patient is \$6.08, while the figure for similar costs in New Jersey is \$9.57, in New York \$7.81 and in Massachusetts \$6.92.

An interracial committee has been organized to cooperate with the interracial consultant of the Department of Welfare in working for a constructive State-wide program of social work for Negroes. Members of the committee are Dr. Robert Labaree, Lincoln University; R. Maurice Moss, Urban League; Miss Jane Sawyer, Y. W. C. A., Germantown; Miss Helen Bryan, Philadelphia; Dr. Whittier C. Atkinson, Coatesville; Rev. Daniel C. Pope, Harrisburg; Allen Harper, Civil Liberties League, Harrisburg; Stephen Raushenbush, Department of Labor and Industry, Harrisburg.

DEPARTMENT OFFERS INSTITUTES ON RELIEF

BECAUSE of the growing public demand for efficiency and farsightedness in the administration of relief work the Department of Welfare is offering to hold one or two day institutes on unemployment relief upon the request of any county group.

These institutes, in which the Pennsylvania Conference on Social Welfare and the Public Charities Association are cooperating, have already been held or arranged for in Huntingdon, Delaware, York, Warren, Bradford and Schuylkill Counties. To facilitate free discussion, groups are limited to not more than fifty members, recruited from the ranks of laymen, public officials, and volunteer and professional social workers. The sessions are held in centrally and accessibly located points in each county. Discussions are led by trained leaders familiar with local needs and experienced in community organization and unemployment relief.

Members of the County Emergency Relief Boards, appointed by the State Emergency Relief Board for the administration of State and federal relief funds, have been among the first to request the holding of institutes in their counties, realizing as they do the need in administering public funds for the close cooperation of all public and private agencies.

It is believed that the institutes may be helpful in bringing about more unified community planning, more firmly knit county organization of social resources. With all social agencies suffering from the effects of limited resources, increased demands and unmet needs, with family breakdown, juvenile delinquency and neglected childhood hovering in the wake of industrial breakdown, an impartial self-analysis of community services is essential.

The programs of public and private agencies are being studied now as never before. No longer does the philanthropist take pride in his "pet charity" unless that charity fills a real need in the community. No longer is the intelligent citizen content to regard public welfare projects, paid from tax funds, as outside of his interest and concern. On both public and private agencies rests the burden of proof that they are essential human services, rendered honestly and economically, and contributing to the prevention of social ills as well as to their cure.

In arranging an institute to further this process of self-evaluation the cooperation of as many groups as possible is desirable. In Delaware County, for instance, the institute was sponsored by the County Welfare Council, composed of fifty-five public and private agencies. The Department of Welfare will welcome inquiries from any representative county group interested in securing a county-wide discussion of unemployment relief problems and local plans to meet them.

What is probably the largest single tree transplanting operating ever attempted in Pennsylvania was recently completed by the Prison Labor Division of the Department of Welfare at its Rockview Nursery, Western State Penitentiary, Bellefonte. Beds four feet wide and totalling three and one-third miles in length were planted with 1,350,000 three-year-old seedling evergreens grown in the nursery. All the work was done by inmate employees. After one or two years of further development the trees will be lifted, packed and shipped for reforestation purposes. The trees should reforest about 1,080 acres of idle land.

OLD AGE WITHOUT SECURITY

THE gospel of Youth, coupled with the relentless toll of economic depression, has made in recent years grave inroads upon the ranks of the self-respecting aged in Pennsylvania. The lists of public and private relief agencies are crowded with citizens past the age of 65 who have made their contributions to society in the past, but who now have lost their savings and have no chance of being reabsorbed into industry. As a result of the lengthening of the life span and the tendency of modern industry to discard the older worker there is an ever-increasing number of dependent aged in Pennsylvania who must be cared for from public funds during their later years.

The Pennsylvania Legislature in 1931 endorsed a constitutional change to permit the use of State funds for the care of the aged. This bill must pass the Legislature again in 1933 before it can go before the people for confirmation.

At present the only recourse available to penniless elderly persons without relatives to support them is the County Home, or almshouse. Approximately 64½%, or 8,351 of the inmates of Pennsylvania's almshouses are men and women past the age of 65, according to reports made to the Bureau of Assistance of the Department of Welfare within the past year. Although some of these elderly almshouse residents are, because of impaired health, definitely in need of the hospitalized institutional care the almshouses are increasingly prepared to give, the majority are physically and mentally, though not economically, capable of continuing an independent existence.

A comparatively limited number of old people are able to spend their declining years in the various privately operated homes for the aged—some twenty-six of which receive financial aid from the State to enable them to carry on their work. The limitations—financial, religious and fraternal—placed upon admission to institutions of

this sort, however, are sufficient to put them outside the realm of possibility for the great mass of citizens.

The average cost of care in Pennsylvania's almshouses (which is appreciably less than the cost in most other states) is \$35.72 a month for each inmate. With an almshouse population rapidly approaching fifteen thousand this represents an annual public charge running into many million dollars.

Contrasted to Pennsylvania's lack of non-institutional assistance for its older citizens is the old age pension system, now operating or legally ratified in seventeen states. The essence of this plan is that it enables elderly men and women either to preserve their own homes and married life (only a very few almshouses have provisions permitting couples to live together after admission) or to be cared for in the homes of relatives who are financially unable to render such care without the aid of the pension money.

In eleven states—California, Delaware, Massachusetts, Montana, New Hampshire, New York, Wyoming, Maryland, Minnesota, Utah and Wisconsin—pensions were paid in the year 1931 to 74,241 persons past the age of 65 (70 is the minimum age limit in the majority of these states). The average amount of these pensions was \$24.68 a month, or \$11.04 less than the cost of almshouse care in Pennsylvania. The expense of the pension system is shared in most cases by the state and the counties, as is the Mothers' Assistance Fund in Pennsylvania. Practically all states have minimum residence and citizenship requirements of at least ten years.

The records of the Department of Welfare reveal innumerable cases of elderly men and women who have been forced to break up homes which they could have continued to maintain with the aid of only a few dollars a month. The experience of other states indicates that the old age pension system makes such aid possible with maximum economy to the state and retention of self-respect by the pensioned citizen.

CHRISTMAS IN PENNSYLVANIA—1932

Dear Sir:

I turn to you for help and advice in my most desperate need. I am out of work for so long, and as hard as I try, I cannot find a job to earn money enough to keep us alive. It is only desperation that leads me to seek help from you. We have no one to turn to, so we humbly turn to you. We come from honest hard working families, and shall make your help good as soon as opportunity presents itself.

Dear Sir:

I am old woman no income i live all lone will you help me get old woman pension i broke mine writ Arme Five difference plces very little youse of mine Arme the left hand douse work for bouth i never been Married.

Dear Sir:

I am asking you if you could give me a little help. I have five children and wife to support and I am only working two day's in three wk. so you can see for yourself I am not making even enough to buy food for a week. We are about starving completely. I am not getting help from anyone. so I would appreciate very much if you would help me a little please.

BITS FROM THE MAIL-BAG

Only fragmentary samples, these, of the letters that pour in to Harrisburg every day—letters not from statesmen, officials, power-seekers, but from the common citizens of Pennsylvania, bewildered and afraid. Some of them may be your neighbors. Public emergency relief funds, State and Federal, can touch only the barest surface of the need among the people of Pennsylvania.

Dear Sir:

Will you please send some help to my poor sister and her two children? They are starving. Please, please send her some help. I am no better off but I have no children. Her husband hasn't had work for over two years and their condition is very pitiful.

Dear Sir:

I understand you give allowance for sick that works on the road. My Husband has been sick for over three wks Threatened of Typhoid fever and we have a family of seven Children and my Mother that will be 90 yrs old again Jan. 8th, 1933—and also sick in bed I am sure it will be deeply appreciated if you allow me for my Grocers every wk till my Husband recovers from his illness that is just as long as I would ask help.

Dear Sir:

I am an unemployed miner and have been unemployed for over a year. Am living in a bad tent. Have seven in family. 5 children 2 goes to school (though they are out now because they have no clothes and shoes. My wife is sick in bed. She is also an expectant mother, all the children are sick from cold baby very sick. It is very cold, we cannot get a house anywhere. If this situation prevails a month longer in this cold weather very serious consequences will result from it.